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V CORPS SOLDIERS PROVIDING IRAQI TROOPS WITH SKILLS TO SECURE AREA IN NORTHWEST BAGHDAD

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CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- Field artillery Soldiers from V Corps' 1st Armored Division are teaching Iraqi troops the skills they will need to secure an area of northwest Baghdad.

At Hawk Base a cadre of Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 1st Field Artillery's Alpha and Bravo Companies are conducting a two-week program of instruction for Iraqis.

The training includes skills like patrolling, reacting to contact, casualty evacuation, and basic soldier skills, said Capt. Daniel Getchel. That core training is followed by instruction in squad-level and company-level tasks.

The cadre also tries to instill discipline in the troops, but Getchel said instructors don't need to spend much time motivating them.

"I've seen an increase in esprit de corps, morale and motivation," he said. "We've had Iraqi soldiers who have been wounded in combat come back for training"

He has also seen an increase in the amount of equipment available to the troops, who are now issued uniforms, physical training clothes, running shoes and two pairs of boots.

On one of the training lanes, the American trainers supervised as an Iraqi army squad cleared a group of buildings where other Iraqi soldiers, posing as insurgents, had set up a position. The cadre acted as observer-controllers and let the Iraqis test their skills.

"We're in more of an evaluative role," Getchel said.

"This is a squad (situational training exercise)," said 1st Lt. John Sackman, an Alpha Company trainer.

Sackman underscored one his primary training goals.

"We're trying to teach initiative down to the lowest levels," he said.

After the exercise, Sackman gathered the cadre and troops together to discuss successes and focus areas as part of an American-style after-action report.

"This terrain was chosen because it is difficult. You are making definite progress," he told the soldiers.

"Keep on moving with a sense of purpose," Banks added. "You're doing a good job."

As the Iraqi troops formed up to march back to their barracks, Getchel summed up his thoughts about the partnership.

"If we put out great effort, these can be great troops," he said. "If they know what the mission is, and they've rehearsed it, they can execute. They're some of the bravest people I've met."

Lt. Col. Sabah Kadhemi, commander of the 307th Battalion of the Iraqi army, agreed.

"They are now ready for any mission," Kadhemi said. "My soldiers are very happy when they catch an insurgent, because they are helping the future of Iraq."

